

PRESS RELEASE

Many news stories are triggered by a timely, well-written press release. Sometimes small community newspapers will run a release word-for-word or with minor changes. Most media, however, will use a release as background information for their article or broadcast. Following are some tips to help you write a release that promotes the news that your organization wants published or aired.

- **Always have a good reason for developing a release.** To be useful, a release must be newsworthy. For example, you might issue a release if your organization:
 - launches a new public education program, such as *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air*
 - receives a grant or donation
 - announces the results of a poll, survey, or study
 - begins a new type of service or makes significant changes to existing services
 - appoints a new director or high-level staff person
 - wants to publicize the local impact of a national news event
 - forms a special task force or local coalition
 - conducts seminars or workshops featuring a local or national celebrity speaker
 - plans local activities to tie into a well-known day, week, or month (e.g., Earth Day in April; Clean Air Month in May; Transportation Week in May; and Try Transit Week in May and September)
 - honors an individual or organization
- **Keep it short.** A release should be no more than two pages in length, double-spaced, and contain short sentences and paragraphs.
- **Stick to the format.** Releases should be typed on your organization's letterhead. At the top of the page, include the name and phone number of the person reporters can call for more information. The first paragraph of the release should begin with the name of your city and the date. If the release is longer than one page, type "-more-" at the bottom of each page except the last. Signify the end of the release by typing "####" or "-30-" centered after the last sentence.
- **Give the most important details first.** Begin with a headline that summarizes the release. The first paragraph should provide the basic news-at-a-glance by answering the six questions "who, what, where, when, why, and how."
- **Be careful with language.** Avoid using slang or technical terms. If they must be used, explain them.
- **Check for accuracy.** Make sure to verify all spelling, statistics, names, and titles.
- **Write factually.** Editorial comments or other opinions should be expressed only in direct quotes.
- **Provide quotes.** Include quotes from recognized authorities, if possible.
- **Seek placement.** Distribute your release to local print and broadcast reporters in your community. Follow up by phone to ensure that they received the release and to encourage them to write or air a story. Try to schedule an interview for the executive director of your organization or other key spokespersons. Collect any resulting newspaper clippings and television or radio stories to document your outreach efforts.

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: (spokesperson)
(phone number)

(Name of Organization) Kicks Off “Clean Air Month” by Launching *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air* Public Education and Partnership-Building Program

(City, date) — The (name of organization) kicked off “Clean Air Month” today with the launch of *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air*, a public education and partnership-building program that provides information about how personal travel choices affect traffic congestion and air quality in the (name of community) area. The program describes actions that anyone can take which will reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. These are easy-to-take steps that fit into busy schedules without major inconvenience.

The program emphasizes several key messages, including:

- When a car that has been sitting for an hour or more is started, it pollutes up to *five times more* than when the engine is warm. For this reason, combining errands into a single, sensible trip — “*trip chaining*” — is more efficient and reduces air pollution.
- A poorly maintained or malfunctioning car can release as much as *100 times* the pollution of a well-maintained car.
- Sharing rides, taking mass transit, and biking and walking for short trips are actions many of us are already taking that reduce traffic congestion and air pollution.

Insert a quote from a local program spokesperson that stresses the effect travel choices have on air quality and how the public's participation is a critical part of the solution. For example: “It is vitally important that we all realize how much our own travel choices affect air quality and traffic congestion. We can be part of the solution by taking a few easy steps that will help improve the air quality in (community name). If we all pitch in, we can make a difference,” said (name, title, organization).

While the program is a local, community-based effort, it has federal support. The program is part of a national transportation and air quality initiative, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (Community name) has become

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an *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air* community by committing to inform the public about transportation and air quality issues, with the goal of reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality.

Community program activities planned include (list activities). For more information about how you can support the program, or how your organization can join the (name of your coalition), please contact (name, phone number, e-mail).

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